



the facts:
navigating life



headspace
National Youth Mental Health Foundation

understanding grief

Grief is what happens when you lose someone or something important to you.

Grief is personal and everyone grieves differently. Our culture, gender, age, past experiences of loss, and belief systems can shape the way we grieve.



It's normal to feel a range of emotions after you experience loss, but that doesn't make it easy.



What is grief?

Grief is a normal and natural response to loss and it can affect many parts of our lives.



Changes to feelings

You might feel some or all of these things:

- shock
- disbelief
- pain
- sadness
- longing
- anger
- resentment
- regret
- guilt (about the past, or about being happy in the future)
- abandonment
- anxiety
- worry.

Changes to thoughts

It can be hard not to think about the loss all the time. You might notice your mind wander and have trouble focusing.

Some people find it hard to care as much about things. It can feel like nothing matters. Some people might think that the world doesn't make sense anymore, and they can't figure out their place in it.

Changes in your body

Our mind and body are closely connected, so grief can have a big impact on our bodies too, such as:

- headaches
- body aches
- weight changes
- changes to your sleep
- changes to eating or appetite
- tiredness
- feeling sick or run down.

Changes in what you do

It can be hard to find the energy to keep up with day-to-day life. Some people might not want to see their family and friends or do things they used to enjoy. Other people find that keeping busy helps them to get through the day.

How long will this go on for?

It's hard to know how long grief will last because everyone is different. However, it's important to know that eventually, things will get easier.

It might be helpful to think of grief like the ocean. Sometimes the power of the ocean is so strong you can feel out of control. Other times it feels manageable, and you can drift along with the waves.

What else should I look out for?

Grief isn't depression. However, it's important to know that grief can leave you vulnerable to experiencing depression in the future. If you're not sure what's happening for you, it can be helpful to reach out for support.

During tough times, some people can turn to alcohol or other drugs to try to get through the pain. This might feel helpful at the time however it can create other problems in the long run.

What can I do to help with my grief?

Grief, and everything that can come with it, can be really intense. If you've experienced loss there are things you can do.

Healthy habits

Try to eat well, cut back on alcohol and other drugs and get a good night's sleep. Setting yourself small, easier goals can help keep up your motivation.

Get into life

Doing stuff can be one of the best ways to help life improve, even when you might not feel like doing anything. Find something that works for you like playing or listening to music, walking, hanging out with family or friends or watching movies.

Take it easy on yourself

Being kind to yourself is always a good idea, but it's even more important when you're having a tough time. Remind yourself that grief hurts, it's hard and it takes time to heal. Feeling confused, overwhelmed, angry (or anything else) and being upset is OK.

Talk about it

Though it can be hard reaching out to others, it can help you feel supported and less alone. Whether you're speaking to a trusted friend, family member, teacher, Elder or a counsellor, it's up to you what you feel comfortable sharing. You might just want to say you're having a tough time.



Find something that works for you like playing or listening to music, walking, hanging out with family or friends or watching movies.

Getting support

If you're finding it hard to cope and your normal activities like your social life, work or studies are being affected, then it's a good idea to ask for professional support.



If you or someone you know is going through a tough time you can get help and support from headspace, your school, TAFE or university wellbeing service or your local health provider. For more information, to find your nearest headspace centre, or for online and telephone support, visit headspace.org.au

If you need immediate assistance call 000 or to speak to someone urgently, please call Lifeline on 13 11 14 or Suicide Call Back Service on 1300 659 467.

headspace National Youth Mental Health Foundation is funded by the Australian Government.

 **headspace**
National Youth Mental Health Foundation

The headspace Clinical Reference Group have approved this clinical resource. Fact sheets are for general information only. They are not intended to be and should not be relied on as a substitute for specific medical or health advice. While every effort is taken to ensure the information is accurate, headspace makes no representations and gives no warranties that this information is correct, current, complete, reliable or suitable for any purpose. We disclaim all responsibility and liability for any direct or indirect loss, damage, cost or expense whatsoever in the use of or reliance upon this information. 03 October 2022